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Viewing cable 07BAGHDAD3630, BARZANI'S CHIEF OF STAFF: BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE

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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
07BAGHDAD3630	2007-11-01 20:17	2011-08-30 01:44	SECRET	Embassy Baghdad

Appears in these articles:

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VZCZCXRO5808
OO RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK
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ZNY SSSSS ZZH
O 012017Z NOV 07
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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4165
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 003630

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/01/2037
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [TU](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: BARZANI'S CHIEF OF STAFF: BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE

REF: BAGHDAD 3617

Classified By: Classified By Jess Baily, Erbil Regional Coordinator for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

This is an Erbil Regional Reconstruction Team message.

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) In an October 30 meeting with RRT officers, Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) President Barzani's Chief of Staff Fuad Hussein emphasized "dialogue, dialogue, dialogue" to solve the crisis over the PKK. He asserted that Turkey's refusal to negotiate with the Iraqi delegation in Ankara on October 26 made resolution difficult and underscored the need for Turkey to come to terms with the reality of an autonomous Kurdish region in Iraq to deal with the situation. Hussein offered no specifics when asked how the KRG might isolate PKK but said it would be unacceptable for Kurdish forces to attack other Kurds; and said that only the U.S. can peaceably solve the crisis through its relationship with the Turkish military. (However, KRG Minister of Interior reported that KRG PM Nechirvan is holding two days of meetings Oct 31 and Nov 1 with top security officials to develop measures to isolate PKK.) Hussein certainly had not given up hope about resolving the crisis diplomatically, but emphasized that Turkey must show a willingness to meet with and listen to Iraqi officials, including KRG representatives. Unfortunately, he had less to say about the KRG's own need to build credibility with Turkey by taking concrete steps to crack down on PKK activities in Kurdish-controlled territory.

Solution to the Crisis: Dialogue

¶2. (C) Regional Reconstruction Deputy Team (RRT) Leader and Erbil Iraq Provincial Action Officer (IPAO) met October 30 with Fuad Hussein, KRG President Barzani's Chief of Staff. Hussein started the meeting by pointing out the disastrous results of the Iraqi delegation's meetings in Ankara on October 26. He said Turkey's behavior is precluding negotiation. He said that the KRG had called PKK attacks illegal and asked them to lay down arms. He complained at length about the lack of respect shown to the Iraqi delegation and Turkey's exclusion of Kurdish officials from some meetings. The delegation came ready for discussion, but Turkey just presented a "list of demands." He echoed what RRT members regularly hear in discussions on the crisis: a peaceful solution is the only option, military interventions will solve nothing, and the KRG will not act on Turkey's orders. When asked about the Kurdistan Islamic Union (KIU) initiative to lead a delegation of political parties to Turkey, Hussein said he advised the KIU not to go unless Turkey guarantees the delegation would be treated with respect and would be met by appropriate officials. The KIU efforts to capitalize on its relationship with the Justice and Development Party (AKP) were admirable, he noted, but the Turkish military is causing the problem. (Note: RRT understands that delegation will not go until after the November 5 meeting between President Bush and PM Erdogan.)

PKK Crisis Masks Turkey's Real Goal

13. (C) Hussein fell back on the oft-cited reason for Turkish aggression: fear of the successful, autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan Region. Hussein said that the KRG-led territory has become to Kurds what Israel is to the Jewish diaspora, and what Iraqi Kurds have achieved cannot be threatened by Turkey. He said the personal attacks on Barzani in the military backed Turkish press are causing further deterioration in relations. He and other advisors have urged Barzani to remain restrained and not respond to the attacks. (Note: He made no mention of Barzani's use of heated rhetoric earlier this year.) Hussein observed that the AKP's success in attracting voters in recent elections has increased pressure on the PKK to act to maintain support among Turkey's Kurdish citizens. He said the military was also using the PKK against the AKP and hinted at possible collusion between the TGS and PKK since they were the only beneficiaries of the crisis.

KRG Unable to Halt PKK Operations

14. (S) Deputy RRT TL pointed out the recent New York Times article, one of many news reports, on the ease with which the PKK operates in north

15. (C) Pressed about the KRG cordoning off the PKK-controlled territory or taking other actions to isolate the PKK, he offered no specifics. He countered that if the U.S. and Europe are unable or unwilling to end PKK operations, how could the KRG be successful? He faulted the Europeans for harboring and allowing PKK financier Ali Riza Altun to travel freely in France and Austria. If the Europeans could not stop Altun, how could the KRG be expected to? Altun's name did not appear on any flight manifests, and the KRG was unaware of his travel. Hussein pointed out that over 10,000 PKK members live freely in Germany. (Note: KRG Minister of Interior reported that KRG PM Nechirvan is holding two days of meetings Oct 31 and Nov 1 with top security officials to develop measures to isolate PKK.)

16. (C) When asked whether KRG would name the PKK a terrorist organization, as the government of Iraq had done, he brought up our double standards, such as alleged U.S. support for the PKK-affiliated Free Life Party of Kurdistan (PJAK), and the Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK's) unhindered travel between Camp Ashraf and Baghdad. He concluded the discussion by noting only the U.S. and Israel can peaceably resolve the crisis.

KNA Closed Session on Crisis Reportedly Tense

17. (C) Hussein arrived an hour late for the meeting, coming directly from President Barzani's three hour Kurdistan National Assembly (KNA) closed session on the crisis. Hussein said the KNA discussion focused on KRG defenses if Turkey invades, and the make-up of the KRG political party delegation traveling to Baghdad to meet with President Talabani and Prime Minister Maliki. Two delegations are expected, a KDP/PUK joint delegation, and a Supreme Council of Political Parties delegation made up of KNA parliamentarians.

18. (C) RRT LES reported October 31 a KNA member said Masud Barzani seemed tired during the session, and very concerned about the situation. He repeated several times that "if the Turks won't receive us, how can a peaceful solution be found?" The KNA atmosphere was tense, with corridor discussions focusing on U.S. actions, and speculation about a repeat of the 1975 "betrayal." (Note: Iranian support for Barzani's resistance to Saddam Hussein ended when Iraq and Iran signed the Algiers Agreement in 1975, delivering a devastating blow to the Kurdish resistance movement. End Note).

Comment

19. (S) Hussein's focus on the "disrespect" shown toward Iraqi and Kurdish officials reveals a high level of mistrust about Turkish motives, particularly those of the Turkish military. Hussein, like many other Kurds, believes that Kurdish autonomy in Iraq is the real target of potential Turkish military action; that only a long term political solution including amnesty will solve the PKK issue; and thus there is little the KRG can do to appease Turkey. He certainly had not given up hope on resolving the crisis through dialogue but stressed that Turkey must show a willingness to meet with and listen to Iraqi officials, including KRG representatives. Unfortunately, he had much less to say about the KRG's own need to build credibility with Turkey by taking concrete steps to crack down on PKK activities in Kurdish-controlled territory. End Comment.

BUTENIS